Summer Graduate Teaching Fellow: Cynthia Taylor
Principles of Operating Systems- Classroom Observation
July, 2011

Class begins with a quiz. Class quietly works on quiz and students appear familiar with the routine of a quiz at the start of class. Most students arrive on time.

Cynthia is very personable with students; her manner is conversational, supportive and friendly.

After collecting the quizzes, she reviews the answers to the quiz by asking for student responses. Cynthia provides praise for correct responses by enthusiastically remarking, “Exactly!” After students’ responses, Cynthia summarized the answers including a rationale, using the words, “We do this because ....”

During her Powerpoint presentation, Cynthia asks questions of students. She provides adequate wait time. Students answer the questions, but sometimes fall short of providing complete explanations. Cynthia adds to students’ responses with additional explanation, then further prompts students through additional questioning. Cynthia responds to students with consistent praise, reasserts the correct answers, and provides in depth explanations.

Cynthia announces that there will be a guest lecturer tomorrow. Cynthia orients students to current topics and links information with content from past lesson. “We talked about this topic when discussing file systems before.” Cynthia reminds student of where the information was presented before and sets the context for today’s lesson. Cynthia asks questions about the topic in order to prompt an anticipatory set for the new concepts.

Cynthia uses a small stuffed animal as the “assigned responder.” One student is given the stuffed animal, and he is responsible for providing an answer/comment to her next question. After providing an answer, the student then passes the stuffed animal to another student whose turn it then becomes to answer the next question.

Cynthia provides opportunities for students to answer application questions. She states a scenario and asks students, “What can happen if ....” Students are expected to synthesize content from previous lessons and apply these criteria to the new scenario.

Cynthia provides modeling for metacognition. Before presenting new lesson material, she suggests, “This is how we can think about it. For each process, we need a definition.” She then provides examples for each of the processes.
She provides an interesting analogy of information systems security. “We can think of resources as if we are trying to get into a club.” The analogy is a real life example, and she provides an authentic frame of reference.

Cynthia consistently provides clear examples. Her speech pattern includes much vocal variety and her voice projects well to the back of the class. (She does use some additional rising intonation at the end of statements suggesting a question, at times, however.)

Cynthia provides many active learning opportunities in the classroom. She asks students to assemble into groups of three to discuss another application scenario. She walks among the student’s desks and interacts often with students, asking for their responses and prompting deeper reflection.

Cynthia’s energy remains high throughout the class. Another application scenario is presented to the class. There is another regrouping of students giving them the opportunity to socially negotiate meaning within their groups. Students are asked to synthesize the information recently discussed in order to apply content to a new scenario.

The class is very well designed with many diverse active learning activities. Cynthia supplies examples of lesson content to both academic and business environments. Cynthia provides a summary of the class, and reviews the final objectives for the day. She also exhibits enthusiasm for her subject area, remarking that “SETUID is unique in that it is both beautiful and arbitrary.”

All in all, Cynthia did a wonderful job in designing many well-prepared, active learning opportunities, clear explanations, and overall generating a warm and friendly learning environment. She shows expertise in her content area, great organizational skills, high energy, a good sense of timing, and she is extremely adept at creating a very effective student-centered classroom!

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